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Chattanooga City Council Approves City's Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Amendment

Updated budget will strengthen public safety and supplement pay raises for essential grant-funded positions, with no tax increase

Chattanooga, Tenn. (Tuesday, Oct. 4) — Chattanooga City Council on Tuesday approved an amendment to the City's Fiscal Year 2023 budget, which will unlock more than \$900,000 for public safety, more than \$300,000 for new, key positions, and more than \$200,000 for critically-needed supplemental pay raises for grant-funded positions in the City's Office of Family Empowerment.

By reallocating funds between departments and appropriating dollars from the City's unassigned contingency fund, the budget updates will be executed with no tax increase and no increase to the overall annual budget, which remains at \$350 million.

"When I took office, I committed to being nimble and adjusting strategies, plans, and funding based on the needs of the city and our residents," said Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly. "With the passage of this budget amendment, we are increasing our capacity to protect public safety and support critical staffing needs that further the One Chattanooga vision, all without increasing taxes for residents. I want to thank our Department of Finance and Administration for the steadfast stewardship of taxpayer dollars that made this possible, as well as the Chattanooga City Council for their ongoing partnership in our work to create a city where everyone can thrive and prosper."

The details of the budget amendment are available for the public to view [here](#).

Public Safety

Under the revised budget, the city will allocate an additional \$924,000 to the Chattanooga Police Department, allowing Chief Murphy to add 11 new, non-sworn positions to her ranks - as well as restore the Major rank and shift other executive ranks - to help strengthen the structure of the department to both prevent and respond to violent crime.

Of the new positions, four are for intelligence analysts who will monitor and analyze footage in the real-time intelligence center, and another three are for behavioral health specialists who will build out the department's crisis response unit, which pairs a social worker with an officer to respond to calls involving mental health issues. The remaining four positions will focus on providing leadership in the areas of public affairs, development, and training.

While the total number of sworn positions remains at 477, the additions to non-sworn positions will allow sworn officers to spend more time on enforcement duties. For instance, the four new intelligence analysts will be able to gather information on potentially violent situations that can then be passed onto sworn officers, who will be able to spend more time in the field and less time behind a desk.

An expanded crisis response unit will help ensure a compassionate and coordinated response to community members experiencing mental health crises. And additional positions in public affairs, development, and training will help the department uphold the highest standards of integrity and transparency, while growing its relationship with the community.

“With the passage of the budget amendment, CPD will be able to fill critical staff roles and better structure our work to both prevent and respond to violent crime, all while increasing community engagement and ensuring transparency, which is vital to our mission of keeping the public safe,” said Police Chief Celeste Murphy. “I’m grateful to our City Council for their support of these new positions and our ongoing work to build safer communities.”

Supplemental Pay Raises for Grant-funded Positions

As part of Mayor Kelly’s commitment to ensure city employees earn a competitive wage, the budget amendment also allocates approximately \$203,000 to supplement pay raises for grant-funded positions in the city’s Office of Family Empowerment. Historically, grant-funded positions have never been supported by city money, and the city first took steps to augment some of those positions by supplementing the salaries of Head Start teachers as part of the original fiscal year 2023 budget.

Now, with the passage of the budget amendment, 11 Office of Family Empowerment employees will also receive supplemental pay raises to ensure they make a living wage. The office plays a critical role in connecting vulnerable residents with city resources and support, and their services were in especially high demand during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pay raises will help ensure the office has the capacity to continue to serve residents in need, with enough funding left in reserve for future programming and pay plan supplementation to help fill currently vacant positions.

Funding for other new positions and community initiatives

The budget amendment also reallocates dollars to provide funding for three additional new positions, including a new attorney to grow the capacity of the City Attorney’s office, a new accountant to increase capacity for special project accounting and tax increment financing administration, and a new senior advisor in the mayor’s office to increase capacity for executive initiatives and cross-departmental collaboration.

The City’s Office of Homelessness & Supportive Housing will receive \$130,000 to support Help Right Here’s work managing the new sanctioned homeless encampment, and \$100,000 is allocated for United Way, which manages the City’s Stormwater Fee Assistance Program for residents in need.

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